

2024 | Issue 1

# Customer Connect

If you need this newsletter in a different format  
please contact: [diversity@platformhg.com](mailto:diversity@platformhg.com)

**platform**  
housing group

# Welcome

I am delighted to welcome you to this bumper edition of your Customer Connect Newsletter. As always, it's full of useful information and guidance on our services and how we can support you.

In this edition, we have also included a handy, pull-out Repairs, Maintenance and Safety guide which tells you all you need to know about our repairs and maintenance service, along with important advice on how you can help us to keep you and your family safe.

Putting customers at the heart of everything we do and ensuring your voice is heard is central to ensuring that we deliver the services you want and expect, so you will see a lot of opportunities for you to get involved and have your say.

We are also launching a new online customer feedback platform which will make it even easier for you to work with us and offer your feedback.

You can get involved in your local community by volunteering for one of our Communities Connected events, by taking part in your local Neighbourhood Walkabout or by joining one of our customer panels.

You will see that we are working hard to improve our Customer Hub assistance by introducing a new in-house out of hours service, along with our chatbot and live chat facilities. We are also continuing to look at ways that we can reduce the amount of time it takes you to get through to speak to an advisor.

If you are struggling with your wellbeing, please talk to us as we're here to help. You can find out more on page 8 about our Wellbeing Fund and the help our Successful Tenancies team can offer you.

And finally, after a recent reassessment we are very happy to share that we have retained our G1 governance and V1 financial viability rating from the Regulator for Social Housing, which are the highest possible achievable grades.

Kind Regards,

**Marion Duffy,**  
Chief Operations Officer



## Customer Commitments – Tell us what you think

We are currently working on a project to develop new Customer Commitments and want you to get involved.

An organisation's customer commitments highlight their customer promises around quality, customer service levels and delivery timescales.

Being able to monitor these new commitments, and share our annual performance against them is an important part of this project, which is why it's essential that they are clear and concise and reflect your views.

To tell us what you think, simply fill in the survey linked below, which should only take you a few minutes to complete. <https://bit.ly/3V4Tnhm>.





# Diversity Grants

If you would like to help us to make a difference in local communities by highlighting their diversity, breaking down barriers between different groups, and including residents in activities that bring them closer together, then you might be interested in applying for a diversity grant.

We support projects up to £500 but will consider applications over that limit if they prove impactful and sustainable.

We welcome applications from community groups and charities willing to work towards benefiting our residents.

The types of projects we've supported have included:

- Music, cuisine and coffee morning events to support community cohesion
- Children's activity clubs
- PRIDE events across our localities

- Dementia awareness events and respite care events for families
- Hate Crime Awareness events

## Like to find out more?

If you'd like to get involved with us, support any of the projects/charities we support or if you know of any groups who may benefit from our help, then please do get in contact with us by emailing: [diversity@platformhg.com](mailto:diversity@platformhg.com) or visiting our website: [www.platformhg.com/diversity-grants](http://www.platformhg.com/diversity-grants).

## 2024 Communities Connected launch

**Our 2024 Communities Connected programme of events is launching in June, with a special focus fortnight, which will run from 10 – 21 June 2024.**

Our Communities Connected programme of events offers our customers, colleagues, and community partners a wide range of opportunities to work together on neighbourhood projects that make a difference and celebrate your communities, themed around community priorities.

### What's on offer?

There are already more than **40 events** available during this first focus fortnight for you to get involved in across our areas, with more being added on a daily basis.

There really is something for everyone, including:

- Spray can workshop in Leicester.
- After-school games in Birmingham.
- Wellbeing event in Cradley Leys.
- Litter picks and estate tidy-ups across all 3 localities.

Simply go to our website: [www.platformhg.com/communities-connected-2024](http://www.platformhg.com/communities-connected-2024) to find out more and sign up to an event near year. You can also suggest a community project for your local area for a future Communities Connected event.

## Neighbourhood Walkabouts

**Why not come along and join us on a neighbourhood walkabout and have a say in how you would like your area improved?**

Walkabouts give you the chance to meet with your neighbourhood officer, local council, police and other community partners to walk around your neighbourhood, including communal areas and gardens, highlighting any issues or concerns you may have.

The walkabout is looking out for anything that makes your neighbourhood look untidy or unsafe and any issues are recorded. An action plan is then pulled together identifying responsibilities and timescales required to resolve the issue.

To find out when your Neighbourhood Walkabout will be, please visit our website:

[www.platformhg.com/neighbourhood-walkabouts](http://www.platformhg.com/neighbourhood-walkabouts)



# Delivering **kindness** to our customers and communities

Each year, Platform's Kindness Campaign offers vital support to our customers and communities.

During our latest kindness campaign, we donated £60,000 to charities, community groups and schools, including local foodbanks, domestic abuse charities, schools and youth Groups and many more, primarily over the Christmas period when the need for support tends to be at its highest.

The funding, which included a Community Chest donation of nearly £10,000, was used by the organisations to offer vital support, buy essential food supplies, and buy presents for children of families who were struggling during the festive season.

To ensure that funding continues to reach those most in need, we use internal and external data to identify key local areas of hardship, where we have a large number of homes and customers.

The photos highlight some of our donations and you can find out more in the news area of our website: [www.platformhg.com/news](http://www.platformhg.com/news)





# We are recruiting Customer Voice Panel members

## Do you want to get involved and turn up the volume on our Customer Voice?

We are recruiting customers to join our Customer Voice Panel, to work alongside our colleagues and Board members to ensure we deliver excellent services.

You don't need any previous experience as we offer full training and support so that you can provide vital feedback and turn up the volume on our Customer Voice.

It's a great opportunity for you to represent the voice of all customers, learn new skills and receive a payment of £2,500 per year, plus all reasonable expenses, although you can choose to be a non-paid voluntary member.

## How can I apply?

If you would like to know more, we'd love to hear from you. Simply scan the QR code, or head over to our website

[www.platformhg.com/customer-voice-panel](http://www.platformhg.com/customer-voice-panel), complete our online form and we will be in touch.



## Meet Customer Voice Panel Member, Megan



Megan is a qualified Youth and Community Worker and has experience in policy writing, running youth groups and working with young people with additional needs and/or disabilities.

*"I feel passionate about customers having a voice when it comes to the services that they pay for and believe that every housing provider should create a platform for their customers to have their say."* explains Megan.

*"Customers who join the panel have the chance to use their voice and have an input in improving the work that Platform does. It also allows for a deeper understanding into regulations, laws, policies and political factors that impact social housing."*

*"I would encourage others to join our panel to help us make a difference."*

# Come and join our Platform team

**It's a great time to join Platform. As one of the largest housing associations in the Midlands, owning more than 48,000 homes we have vacancies across our regions and a variety of different roles.**

As an inclusive employer we're really proud of our supportive environment, offering excellent terms and conditions, family friendly policies and the chance to work for an organisation whose passion about the delivery of social housing is at the heart of everything we do.

- Generous holiday allowance
- Training and development opportunities
- Family friendly policies
- Health cash plan
- Remote working widely available (where role permits)

It's a great time to join us, so why not visit [www.platformhg.com/join-our-team](http://www.platformhg.com/join-our-team) to find out more.



# Your Platform

## – Access our Services 24/7

Your Platform is a self-service customer portal which enables you to manage your tenancy, conveniently at a time that suits you.

By registering to use Your Platform, you will be able to:

- Check your rent balance and recent transactions.
- Make a payment.
- Change a direct debit.
- Report a repair.
- Update personal information.

Nearly **24,000 customers** are already taking advantage of this great service which is available 24/7.

We are looking at ways that we can improve the options available to you on the portal, so please keep an eye out for further updates!

### Why not join today?

To register simply head over to our website:  
[www.yourplatformhg.com/register-tenancy](http://www.yourplatformhg.com/register-tenancy)

You will need:

- Your tenancy reference number – which can be found on any letter from us.
- Your date of birth.
- Your email address.

## Improving our Customer Hub services

### Out of Hours success!

In October 2023, we launched our new in-house out of hours service, which has proven hugely successful in enhancing and improving your customer experience.

From its launch in October 2023 to the end of April 2024, our dedicated and skilled team has:

- Answered **13,123** out of hours calls after an average wait time of only **4 minutes 7 seconds**.
- Handled **22,047** customer enquiries via our digital channels such as the customer portal, email, and webchat.
- Improved accuracy in reporting emergency repairs.
- Delivered a **24.5%** reduction in emergency callouts - 8,386 jobs down from 10,731, compared to the same period the previous year.
- Saved **823 hours** in operative sleep time, leading to extra operatives being available during the week to carry out responsive repairs.

### Chatbot and Live Chat

In just one month (April 2024):

**662** live chats were answered.

Average wait time for a live chat to be answered:  
**3 minutes 45 seconds**.

**6,654** Chatbot questions answered.



### Day to day call answering

You told us that it was difficult to get through when you called us and experienced long waiting times to speak to an advisor, so service improvement in this area has been our main focal point.

By introducing new innovations and employing more advisors, April 2023 to March 2024 saw significant improvements in our call acceptance rates and average wait times. Our investment to deliver the out-of-hours service in-house has also contributed to improved telephone response times during our main opening hours, along with increasing the number of advisors and making the answering of calls our number one priority.

**175,369** calls answered.

Call answer rate of **71.41%** during our main opening hours.

Average time to answer a call **13 minutes 55 seconds** - a reduction of **6 minutes 56 seconds** compared to the previous year.



# Getting in touch online

Did you know that there are lots of ways that you can get in touch with us digitally 24/7?

You can:

- Report a non-urgent repair, ask a general housing enquiry, or report ASB via the:
  - Your Platform customer portal: <https://your.platformhg.com>.
  - Platform website: [www.platformhg.com/contact-us](http://www.platformhg.com/contact-us).
- Ask our website Chatbot a frequently asked question.
- Send us a private message on our Facebook account [www.facebook.com/PlatformHousing](http://www.facebook.com/PlatformHousing).

## Are you, a friend or family member experiencing domestic abuse?

**Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence.**

It's very common and in the majority of cases is carried out by a partner or ex-partner but can also be a family member or carer.

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse.

This definition includes stalking, online abuse, honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

If you are a Platform customer and need to report domestic abuse, or if you have any concerns or questions, please call **0333 200 7304** or complete our online website form – [www.platformhg.com/domestic-abuse](http://www.platformhg.com/domestic-abuse).

We can offer you specialist support, including referrals to other agencies who can arrange emergency accommodation, and give general advice and guidance.



# Platform's Wellbeing Fund

## Are you struggling and finding it hard to manage your household bills?

You can apply for Wellbeing Funding to help you cover the cost of food, essential items such as school uniforms, energy and utility costs as well as help to bridge the gap between making a benefit application and your first payment.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, our Wellbeing Fund has supported **3,626** customers with essentials such as food, clothing and energy vouchers. We have also provided customers with whitegoods, beds and digital and wellbeing support.

We have supported with:

Over **2,000** supermarket vouchers for food.

**1,640** energy vouchers/payment cards.

Over **1,000** white goods orders.



### **“It stopped me having to make the choice between food and heating”**

Tracey submitted a Wellbeing Fund application on our website. A single parent with two children, she was really struggling with energy costs and moving from direct debit payments to pre-payment meters.

Her payments had doubled since moving home and she was going without food to keep the meters topped up.

Our Wellbeing Team assessed her application and an award was made to Tracey for food and energy.

*“It stopped me having to make the choice between food and heating and gave me some relief from financial stress.”* explains Tracey.

*“The support I’ve received was more than I could have hoped for and I now might be able to buy my daughter a small Christmas present as the food and energy vouchers will provide us with a week’s worth of shopping and gas and electric.”*



### **How to apply**

To find out if you might be eligible for a Wellbeing Fund award and to complete our online application form, simply head over to our website:

[www.platformhg.com/platform-wellbeing-fund](http://www.platformhg.com/platform-wellbeing-fund).

## Talk to us – we’re here to help

If you’re struggling with your finances, we’re here to help. Our **Successful Tenancies Team** advisors can help with all aspects of money, budgeting, grants and benefits advice including:

- A full benefits check to see what you might be entitled to.
- Advice and guidance on Universal Credit.
- Help applying for benefits.
- Budgeting tips to help manage your money.
- Referrals to specialist debt teams and energy support services.

Since April 2023, the team has received **6,462** referrals and helped customers to access **£66,872** in additional grants and an annualised figure of **£3 million** in additional benefit claims.

You can find out more and complete an online referral form by visiting our website:

[www.platformhg.com/money-benefits-advice-job-support](http://www.platformhg.com/money-benefits-advice-job-support) or calling **0333 200 7304**.





# Platform retains top regulatory rating

We're pleased to share with you that, after a recent reassessment, we have retained our **G1 governance** and **V1 financial** viability rating from the Regulator for Social Housing which are the highest possible achievable grades.

This means that for the second year running we've performed at the highest level for both governance and viability, giving you the peace of mind that your home is in safe hands.

## Governance G1

The provider meets the requirements on governance as set out in the Governance and Viability Standard.

## Viability V1

The provider meets the requirements on viability set out in the Governance and Financial Viability Standard and has the capacity to mitigate its exposures effectively.

Our Chief Executive **Elizabeth Froude** said:

*"We are extremely pleased to have had our rating reaffirmed as G1/V1, especially in the ever more difficult operating area we work in."*

*"This is a true reflection of the hard work of the whole team at Platform who remain focused on keeping our customers and organisation safe, strong and resilient."*



**Elizabeth Froude,**  
Group Chief Executive

## Stay Nimble and find a new job

Are you looking for work and need some help building confidence or getting started?

Platform has partnered with Stay Nimble so that our customers can get **FREE** support with all sorts of work-related challenges. You will get to talk to a qualified coach, consider your career options, gain confidence and find direction.

**Stay  
Nimble**

### What do Stay Nimble offer?

- 6 hours of coaching with a dedicated career coach who is registered with the Career Development Institute.
- Lifetime free access to the Stay Nimble platform.
- Online tools that will assess your strengths and skills and match them to a wide range of jobs and careers.
- Help with career researching and job searching.
- Guidance with CV writing.
- A community of like-minded people who will inspire and encourage you to reach your full potential.

### How do I find out more?

You can find out more and complete our online form by visiting our website: [www.platformhg.com/career-coaching](http://www.platformhg.com/career-coaching) or by calling us on **0333 200 7304**.

# Speak Up!

**Safeguarding is a process of making sure children and adults who could be considered vulnerable or at risk are protected from being abused, neglected or exploited. People and organisations work together to tackle abuse and neglect.**

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and we work closely with other agencies to promote people's welfare and protect them from harm.

## How can I report a safeguarding concern?

1. If there is a child or adult in immediate danger or a crime has been committed it's really important you phone 999.
2. Once you have done this or if the issue is not immediate, you can report your concerns directly to your local authority safeguarding adult or child team by looking up Safeguarding on their website or by calling them.

3. You can also alert us to your concerns by calling our Customer Hub on **0333 200 7304**.

Reporting abuse can be done anonymously. We will not normally take action or share information without the consent of the person who is being abused. The exception to this is when there are others at risk of harm and/or where the person at risk is not able to make a decision for themselves because of their mental capacity or where we believe the risk could seriously affect their well-being.

Further guidance is also available on our website: [www.platformhg.com/safeguarding](http://www.platformhg.com/safeguarding)



## Join us to celebrate your **Community Heroes!**

**Platform's annual Community Heroes Awards recognise those unsung heroes who make a real difference, whether as an individual or as part of a community group.**

There are a range of awards up for grabs including, Going the Extra Mile, Young Person, Communities Together, Customer Involvement, Positive Change and Community Partnership.

If you'd like to find out who this year's Community Heroes Awards winners are and hear some of their inspirational stories, please join us on our YouTube channel, by scanning the QR code below, at:

**12 noon – Wednesday 19 June 2024**



## Do you know a Community Hero?

Although nominations are now closed for this round of awards, you can still nominate your local Community Hero for our 2025 awards. Simply head over to our website to find out more and complete the online nomination form:

[www.platformhg.com/community-heroes](http://www.platformhg.com/community-heroes)





# Building much needed affordable homes

Platform is continuing to deliver on its promise to build more affordable homes with a record-breaking 1,534 homes built during 2023-24 and plans for even more new homes this year.

Contracts have already been secured to develop a further 2,330 homes on 27 different sites across our regions. This includes building 113 new homes at Bishops Cleeve, Cheltenham and 270 homes at Perrybrook, Gloucester, along with our large development in Nottingham, where over 300 new homes are planned.

Many of these homes will be gas free, to help support the Government's Zero Net 2050 target.

**Gerraint Oakley**, Platform's Executive Director of Growth and Development said:

*"The number of new homes we are building highlights our dedication to keep building high quality, energy efficient homes for our customers. Partnership working has been and continues to be key to achieving success and building more affordable homes across the Midlands."*

Earlier this year, Platform was named in Inside Housing's Top 10 Builders of Social Rent Accommodation in the country, and our important strategic partnership with Homes England is set to continue.

Number of homes built in 2023-24

**1,534**

Number of homes planned to be built in 2024-25

**2,330**

## Delivering our largest ever land-led site in Gloucestershire

Planning permission has been granted for us to build 270 new homes in Perrybrook, on the outskirts of Gloucester with plans to install energy efficient air-source-heat pumps instead of traditional gas boilers.

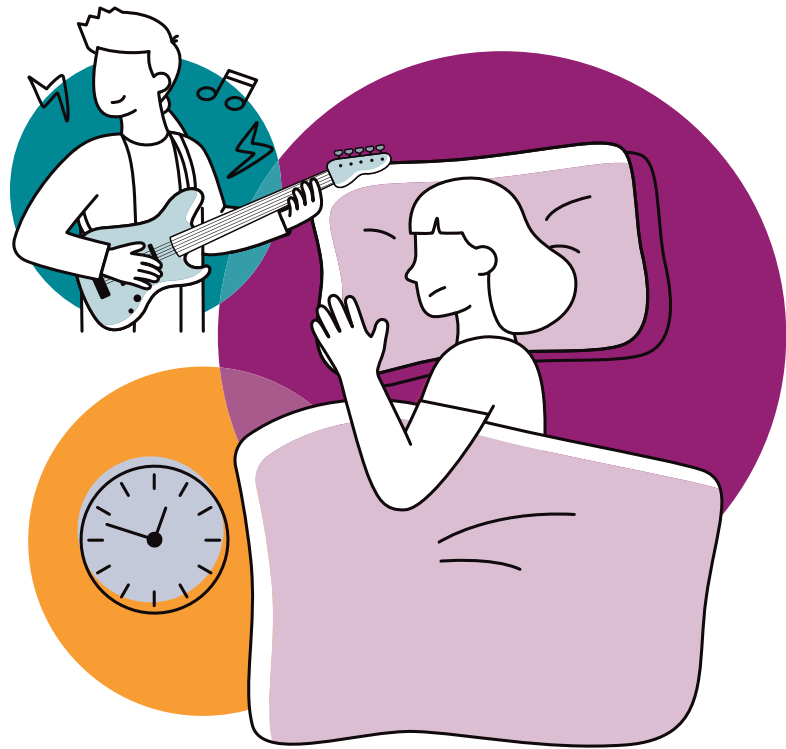
The site, which is our largest ever land-led development, will offer a mix of affordable homes to rent and purchase through shared ownership and also homes for outright sale, with the first homes expected to be ready in 2025.

# Working together to tackle **Anti-Social Behaviour**

We understand that Anti-Social Behaviour (often referred to as ASB) can have a big impact on your health, sense of security and the way that you feel about your home.

Our dedicated Community Safety Team work with our local Neighbourhood Officers, police, local council and other community partners to resolve any ASB issues as quickly as possible.

In some instances, when an acceptable solution cannot be found, we may need to take Court Action against the perpetrator.



## Report it!

If you are experiencing ASB, you can report it to us online on our website:

[www.platformhg.com/report-anti-social-behaviour](http://www.platformhg.com/report-anti-social-behaviour)

You can also access our handy ASB toolkit which offers lots of guidance, including details of the kind of behaviour that is treated as ASB, advice to help you try and resolve a problem and sources of specialist support.

Please remember, if you are in immediate danger, you should call the police on 999.

## Service Charges

We want to ensure that all of our customers who pay service charges receive a good service and value for money.

That's why we are working on an extensive, in-depth service charge review and rebasing project, which will take up to two years to complete, to ensure that all of our service charges are accurate, transparent and fair.

This year we are focussing on reviewing our specialist housing schemes.

This will involve checking that all the services received are correct and the service charges reflect what it actually costs us to deliver the service, as we do not make any profit from service charges.

Should this review lead to a change in your service charges, we will let you know in your annual rent review letter.

If you have any queries about your current service charges, please contact our Customer Hub on **0333 200 7304** or speak to your local Neighbourhood or Retirement Housing Officer. You can also find out more about how service charges are set on our website: [www.platformhg.com/paying-your-rent-and-service-charges](http://www.platformhg.com/paying-your-rent-and-service-charges).

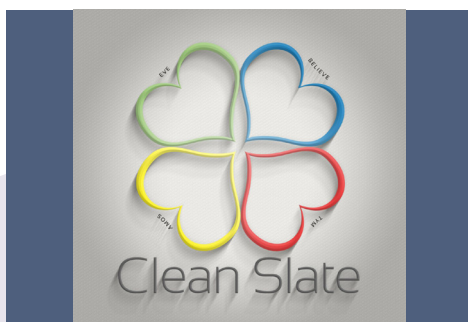


# Community Chest Funding supports our customers and communities

Customer groups, local charities, clubs and other not-for-profit organisations can apply for Community Chest Funding to support projects that benefit our customers and communities.

Last year, we received **146 applications**. Our Customer Voice Panel members lead on the Community Chest funding decision making, including assessing and approving grant applications.

Awards totalling **£160,523.68** have been made during this time and below are some of the great projects our Community Chest Funding has supported:



**Clean slate,  
Oxfordshire  
£3,200.00**

Grant to support a project called Believe to help train extra volunteers to support groups for children; provide additional training to its counsellors to work with children; work with local schools to provide education about abuse.



**Munchkins baby  
and toddler group,  
Lincolnshire  
£1,234.35**

Grant funding to enable the club to continue providing its services to the local community for the next 12 months, for 2 hours every week.



**Malvern United Football  
Club – Young Players,  
Malvern  
£1,136.35**

Grant funding awarded to ensure the club has all the equipment they need including training balls and a match ball for each team, flags, cones, bibs and coaches bags.



**Freedom Leisure,  
Derbyshire  
£3,000**

Grant funding awarded to extend its seated exercise clubs at both Victoria Court and Denefields Court in Matlock.



**The Parrot Zoo Trust at  
Lincolnshire Wildlife Park,  
Boston.  
£2,000**

Grant funding awarded to enable the charity to provide free sessions to school children from The Park Academy in Boston.

## How to apply

If you're a charity, club or not-for-profit organisation, you can apply to our Community Chest for funding to bring about positive changes for Platform customers and communities. The quickest and simplest way to apply is by completing our online website application form – [www.platformhg.com/platform-community-chest](http://www.platformhg.com/platform-community-chest).



# Epperstone Court raise money for local NHS

To mark the NHS 75 years of service celebrations and to say thank you, customers and colleagues at Epperstone Court, Nottingham raised £310 for Nottingham's Hospital Charities.

To mark their 75 years milestone the NHS called for everyone to join together to celebrate and get involved in NHS 75 activities. Our residents at Epperstone Court rose to the challenge by holding a cream tea and raffle, which was supported by a donation from our Community Engagement team.

**Lorraine DeCosta**, Retirement Housing Officer explained: *"Our kind residents and staff at Epperstone Court really wanted to get together to celebrate 75 years of our amazing NHS and to say thank you to our local hospitals."*

*"It was lovely to see everyone come together to have fun and commemorate this incredible milestone, particularly as some of our customers were alive when the NHS was formed."*

**Coralie Howells**, who celebrated her 100th birthday last year, is one of these customers and remembers

what life was like before the introduction of the NHS and the vital services that they offer.

Coralie said *"We all really wanted to raise money for our local hospitals as they do such an amazing job, often under difficult circumstances. Taking care of the NHS for future generations is essential, as everyone should have the right to access free, medical care when they need it; something that was not available in the first 25 years of my life."*



## Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Have your say!

**Feedback from our customers is hugely important to us and to the housing sector as a whole.**

That's why the Regulator for Social Housing has introduced new Tenant Satisfaction Measures, TSMs for short, in a bid to hold housing providers to account for their actions and give customers greater visibility of their performance.

### What are TSMs?

TSMs are 22 measures that all housing associations must report on in a bid to drive up standards for customers and give you a better understanding of how we are performing as your landlord.

The 22 satisfaction measures are split into two parts, covering a number of key areas:

1. **12 customer perception survey measures** collected through surveying customers, directly.
2. **10 performance measures**, collected through our management performance data.

### How can I have my say?

Our partners IFF Research contact a random selection of customers each year, either by telephone or email to seek your feedback. It will take just 10 minutes of your time to get involved, so please take part if they contact you.

Alongside this perception survey we will continue to talk to you and ask for your feedback when you have received a service from us, including repairs, gas servicing and dealing with ASB so, again, please take part and let us have your feedback.

### How can I view Platform's TSMs results?

Our 2023-24 TSM performance information will be available to view on our website in July, so please head over there to take a look - [www.platformhg.com](http://www.platformhg.com).

The results will also be shared in our Customer Annual report.





# Gas Services – Enhancing your customer experience

To ensure we deliver high quality gas services we have recruited a new dedicated domestic gas quality control auditing team.

Committed to safety and customer satisfaction, this team will oversee and audit the work carried out by our skilled gas engineers, guaranteeing the highest standards of performance and reliability with a focus on delivering:

- **Heightened quality control:** Direct control over the auditing process, ensuring that every aspect of our gas services meet or exceed industry regulations and standards.
- **Faster response times:** Swiftly addressing any issues or concerns, offering quicker resolutions and minimal disruption.
- **Enhanced accountability and training for our engineers:** Extensive audit checks and ongoing engineer coaching and training.
- **Peace of Mind:** Knowing that the work carried out in your home is being meticulously audited and is safe.
- **Consistent quality:** Auditing and reviewing processes to offer consistent quality and reliability.



## Improving our repairs service

We are developing new software aimed at improving your customer experience, cut down on the number of missed appointments and reduce the need for you to chase follow-up repair appointments.

### Operative on the way

New operative on the way software will enable us to message you when a repair operative is on route to your home, providing you with an up to date time of arrival and the opportunity to speak to them directly.

### Follow-up repairs appointments

In response to customer feedback we are investing in software that will enable a repair operative to book a follow-up appointment, whilst they are still with you. For example, when a part needs to be ordered, so a return visit is required.

This will cut down on the need for you to call us for a repair update.

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## Guidance on renting a home

Finding a home or somewhere to retire to can be confusing.

To help you on your journey, we have created a step-by-step guide, which is available on our website: [www.platformhg.com/rent-home](http://www.platformhg.com/rent-home).

It includes information about the choice-based lettings system and how it works, what a mutual exchange is, useful FAQs and most importantly the range of homes that are available.



# Why not become a Community Rep?

Would you like the chance to support your local community and make a real difference where you live?

Community Reps work with our Community Engagement Team to create a strong link between Platform and your community, primarily to help us ensure that your neighbourhood is a safe, friendly, tidy place where people are proud to live.

## Meet Community Rep, Sam

Sam has lived in Droitwich for over 30 years and has resided in the local area for most of her life. She became a Community Rep in 2019.

*"I support people on a real mix of things as they know that if I can help them, I will. The older generation often need my support as they don't always have access to the internet or know how to use it, so if they are experiencing problems with their home or in the local community, I will help them report it."* explains Sam.

*"Being a Community Rep can be fun as it's all about bringing your community together and making it a better place to live."*

*"It was tricky at first, but it gave me the confidence to get back out and about, speak to my neighbours and get involved in activities locally, which is so important when you have small children."*

*"Although it can be difficult at times, as people tend to think things can be done immediately, it can also be extremely rewarding as I have developed good relationships with people locally and they know that if I can help get fly-tipping removed or support them to report a repair, I will."*

*"I'd definitely recommend that other customers find out more and give being a Community Rep a try!"*



## XL Bully Dog Ban Guidance



**Following a rise in attacks and fatalities caused by XL Bully dogs, the government has added this breed to the list of dogs banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.**

If you own an XL Bully dog or puppy you need to comply with all the new requirements for this breed of dog. Even if you are not 100% sure if your dog is an XL Bully, the government is recommending that you take a precautionary approach and that you comply with the new requirements, which came into force in December 2023, making it illegal to:

- Sell an XL Bully dog.
- Abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray.
- Give away an XL Bully dog.
- Breed from an XL Bully dog.
- Have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle.

If you have successfully secured an Exemption Certificate for your dog, you need to let us know to ensure that our records are up to date. You can do this by completing our online website enquiry form - [www.platformhg.com/general-enquiries](http://www.platformhg.com/general-enquiries) or by calling our Customer Hub on **0333 200 7304**.

When we receive your certificate of exemption, we will confirm this in writing to you and outline our expectations, which will include securing your dog during any visits from Platform colleagues.

## Find out more

The government has guidance on their website explaining more and what you should do if you have not applied for a Certificate of Exemption - [www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-for-the-ban-on-xl-bully-dogs](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-for-the-ban-on-xl-bully-dogs).

## How can I volunteer?

To read more and register your interest, simply head over to our website: [www.platformhg.com/community-reps](http://www.platformhg.com/community-reps).



# Customers who scrutinise our work

**Our scrutiny panel is a group of customers who work with colleagues and other customers to carry out reviews of our services.**

Panel members act as critical friends to Platform, giving us a customer perspective on our policies, procedures and working practices. They often make recommendations on how services can be altered to improve the experience for all our customers.

Over the last 12 months the panel has:

- Worked with our Estates Team to give customer input into the new in-house grounds maintenance service.
- Completed a follow up survey to a review carried out in 2022 on our Customers' Experience of Reporting Repairs. This was to understand if the service has improved since their first review.

They are also currently working on a review of our Complaints process, with a specific focus on understanding why complaints are escalating to Final Review stage.



## Meet Scrutiny Panel member Alison



Alison decided to join the Scrutiny Panel to help provide a voice for all tenants and assist Platform to improve services.

*"The panel provides a resident's view of life in social housing and helps to improve standards for all. It also helps Platform maintain a better understanding of our requirements and therefore a better standard of services."* explains Alison.

*"For example, our current project is investigating a particular part of Platform's complaints handling. We are scrutinising the policies, systems and procedures used and talking to staff and management who are always friendly and willing to help with our reports. By listening to each other we work together to suggest essential improvements that can make life better for all of us."*

*"Being part of the panel can also give you valuable experience, skills and understanding which certainly add to a CV for job seeking. Most of all it's so rewarding to be part of a community that benefits all."*

## Sound interesting?

We currently have a number of vacancies for customers to join our Scrutiny Panel, so if you think this could be the role for you, please scan the QR code or visit our website:

[www.platformhg.com/scrutiny-panel](http://www.platformhg.com/scrutiny-panel) to find out more and register your interest.



# Advanced Technology to support older people.

The TAPPI project, which began in 2022, was funded by the Dunhill Medical Trust with Housing LIN and the Tenants Services Authority (TSA).

We were delighted that Platform's Harling Court in Ledbury was chosen as one of the six test bed sites for the trial. During the project, technologies have been trialled with our customers that are designed to respond to individual specific needs in an independent living setting.

A whole host of new and innovative technologies were tested including GPS pendants, video doorbells, beacons, remotely controlled appliances (including lights, electrical sockets, doors, and curtains), falls detectors, tipper kettles, electronic tablets, care platforms, magic tables, touchscreen notice boards and wall-mounted call systems.

The project aimed at improving digital connectivity, reducing isolation and improving service engagement and satisfaction has recently come to an end.

The results have:

- Shown that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, ease of use is crucial and design of technologies must consider diverse needs.
- Produced the 10 principles of TAPPI: Adaptable, Co-Produced, Cost effective, Choice led, Interoperable, Inclusive, Outcome Focused, Person Centred, Preventative, and Quality Focused.
- Informed our future plans on what technologies could be built into our new specialist housing developments.

We were delighted that this TAPPI project, including the extensive work involved and the engagement from our retirement customers, was recognised as a finalist in the Partnerships category at the TSA - The voice of technology enabled care ITEC Awards 2024.

If you are interested in finding out more, please email: [Daniel.Rock@platformhg.com](mailto:Daniel.Rock@platformhg.com)



# Community Conversations

Our Customer and Community Engagement teams will soon be hitting the road again and they'll be bringing other colleagues and teams with them!

Community Conversations are held across our localities to give you the opportunity to:

- Talk to us about the issues that matter to you.
- Find out more about how you can get involved in shaping our services.
- Hear from colleagues and teams across our organisation who will offer guidance and share future plans.

We regularly advertise our Community Conversations on our Facebook page

[@PlatformHousing](https://www.facebook.com/PlatformHousing) and website: [www.platformhg.com/community-conversations](http://www.platformhg.com/community-conversations).

As we'd love to meet as many of our customers in our communities as possible, you can also complete our online web form letting us know if you'd like to see a Community Conversation event in your local area.





# Do you need help to get online?



Our Digital4Everyone sessions are a free one stop shop to get you and people in your local community online.

We work with our community partners and volunteer Digital Champions to support regular events in our neighbourhoods to introduce you to what's possible when you get online.

Whether you need help with computer basics are looking for work online or want to learn more about using email or social media, our Digital4Everyone sessions can help, so why not take a look at our website: [www.platformhg.com/digital4everyone](http://www.platformhg.com/digital4everyone) to find a group near you.



## Are you interest in becoming a volunteer?

We are looking for Digital Champion volunteers to help others improve their digital skills and overcome digital exclusion.

As a Digital Champion you will be invited to volunteer at IT sessions in community venues near your home. You don't need to be an IT expert or have a degree in coding to become a digital champion. You just need:

- Basic IT skills, including communicating via email
- Patience and a friendly personality
- To be flexible and adaptable
- An understanding of, and commitment towards, equality and diversity

To find out more and register your interest visit our website: [www.platformhg.com/digital-champions](http://www.platformhg.com/digital-champions).

# Our new online Customer Feedback platform – Watch this Space!

We're launching an exciting new platform that will make it even easier to work with us and offer your feedback to shape and influence future services.

The new platform will allow you to view and take part in consultations, projects, surveys, and polls at a time that suits you. You'll see the named contact running the project and access real-time updates and developments for the activities you have taken part in.

Keep an eye out over summer, when we go live with the platform, as we'll be running a campaign to encourage you to sign up with lots of prize draws for those who register!

## Do you want to take part in the testing?

If you'd like to be part of the initial testing for the project, please register your interest to join our Customer Sounding Board on our website: [www.platformhg.com/get-involved](http://www.platformhg.com/get-involved) and we'll be in touch.



# How to make a complaint or give feedback

We welcome your feedback as we are committed to giving an excellent service to our customers.

We know that sometimes things go wrong or the service you receive falls short of your expectations. When this happens, we want to hear from you so we can put it right and improve our services to prevent similar problems from happening again.

You can make a complaint by:

- Completing our online website form at [www.platformhg.com/complaints](http://www.platformhg.com/complaints).
- Calling our customer hub on **0333 200 7304**.
- Emailing [customerfeedback@platformhg.com](mailto:customerfeedback@platformhg.com)
- Writing to Platform Housing Group, 1700 Solihull Parkway, Birmingham Business Park, Solihull, B37 7YD.

## Find out more

You can find out more and view a copy of our complaints policy and process on our website: [www.platformhg.com/complaints](http://www.platformhg.com/complaints).



## What is the Falls Response Service?

Platform has been running the Falls Response in Worcestershire, on behalf of the NHS since 2013.

The service responds to non-injury fall alarm calls in the community with over 4,000 alarm activations per year triaged by monitoring centres.

Specialist patient lifting equipment is used allowing patients to be elevated from the floor safely and our Worcester based teams are able to make urgent referrals for patients that need onward referral to other services.

If you live in Worcester and are interested in this service, please visit our website: [www.platformhg.com/falls-response](http://www.platformhg.com/falls-response) to find out more.



## Approved by Customers

Our Customer Sounding Board's (CSB) role in reviewing customer communications is important as it ensures that the look and feel of our customer documents, along with the content and information, is friendly, informative and easily to understand.

We have worked with the CSB to develop a Created with Customers stamp, which is added to any documents they have provided feedback on so that you can see at a glance that it has been reviewed by customers.

*"Doing the surveys keeps me up to date on services that are provided and gives me the opportunity to comment on what matters to me and what improvements I would like to see."*

Jane - Involved Customer.



## Register your interest now!

If you think becoming a Customer Sounding Board member is just for you, why not register your interest now?

Just head over to our website to find out more and complete our register your interest form: [www.platformhg.com/get-involved](http://www.platformhg.com/get-involved).